

## NEW PUBLICATIONS.

SIR WILLIAM JOHNSON.

SIR WILLIAM JOHNSON AND THE SIX NATIONS.  
By WILLIAM ELLIOT GRIFFIN. 16mo, pp. xii, 227.  
Dodd, Mead & Co.

The history of the Mohawk Valley must always be of deep interest to the people of this State, especially, and with that history in its most important period the life of Sir William Johnson is intimately allied. The work he did was of a kind which could have been done by no other man, and it was invaluable. If he gained his first foothold in the Mohawk Valley through the aid of a kinsman who had no sympathy with the liberty-loving Dutchmen and Germans who formed the greater part of its population in the eighteenth century, and if he himself was a stanch Royalist,—these facts in no way hindered his usefulness or diminished his popularity. The young Irish adventurer who came across the ocean to act as agent for his kinsman was a man who could not have been kept from advancing under any circumstances, and he was of character so frank and genial that he was sure to recommend himself to all who came in contact with him. But he was not merely a thrifty and warm-hearted young man; he had in him the elements of true greatness. Thousands began life in similar circumstances. Most of his neighbors on the Mohawk died like him, with the Indians. But he alone saw the advantage of acquiring a thorough knowledge of the red men, and he alone showed his ability to turn this knowledge, when acquired, to the benefit of the community and the progress of civilization.

It was the time when France and England were struggling for the mastery of North America. The Indian question was then burning one, upon the attitude of the nomads the ability of the white settlers to retain their hold on the Mohawk Valley depended directly. This valley formed the most fertile portion of the domain of the Iroquois. It was divided among the Six Nations, so called, and if the Six Nations could be persuaded to join the French there would be no peace or security between Albany and Lake George. Johnson was the one man who proved capable of dealing with this vital problem. He had so ingratiated himself with the Indians that in a few years he acquired greater influence than any of their own chiefs could exercise over them. With rare versatility and, one would think, no little self-sacrifice, he became as good an Iroquois as any of them. He hesitated at scarcely anything in his resolve to gain their confidence. Wearing their dress, adopting their customs, learning to excel in their sports, their woodcraft, and their methods of war, eating their food, speaking their language, using their rhetoric, he became not only a friend, companion and intimate in their external life, but a power in their councils. In his business dealings with them he had adopted integrity as his first principle. He never cheated them and he never lied to them. In short, his methods afford the strongest possible contrast to those upon which Indian affairs throughout the country have too uniformly been conducted. The issue of his policy is worth pondering. It gave him a prestige and an influence which enabled him for the rest of his life to control the Iroquois, to baffle the incessant intrigues of the French, and to secure for the defence of the Americans in the Mohawk Valley a band of warriors whose hands, but for his wisdom and energy, would almost certainly have been turned against them.

This was a priceless service, and it entitles Sir William Johnson to rank as one of the Makers of America. Nor was the good work done once and for all. Events and the perverseness and stupidity of royalist governors and military commanders repeatedly jeopardized the good under-standing which Johnson had established with the Iroquois. Again and again the league of friendship and alliance was threatened, sometimes from within, sometimes from without. Again and again Johnson sent out his runners, or went himself, brought the sullen or recalcitrant chiefs together in council, and dissuaded them from contemplated ruptures of their relations with the Americans. This was, in fact, the work of his life! though side by side with it he was building his own fortune and amassing a great estate. The English Government appreciated and rewarded him, bestowing upon him a baronetcy and a gift of five thousand pounds in recognition of his eminent services at the Battle of Lake George, when Deakun was defeated and made prisoner. That engagement showed that Johnson was a born soldier, and he was to confirm that impression later, and to share with Clive the title of a "heaven-sent general." In truth, he was a many-sided man; not only a man of action, but a student; for his literary tastes were cultivated at a time and in a region where and where literature was scarcely a factor in the general life.

In the summer Johnson traded and journeyed and entertained his Indian friends. In the winter he enjoyed his library at Johnson Hall or Mount Johnson as it came to be called. His public life soon grew very full. Superintendent of the Indian Department, Member of the Executive Council, Colonel, and later Major-General in command on the frontier—he devoted himself to his manifold and arduous duties with ceaseless energy and zeal. There can be no question that Sir William Johnson was for many years the most important, useful and active man engaged in frontier affairs. He fairly dominated the Mohawk Valley; and if his reputation has suffered, it is because the existing events of the Revolution and the Tory affiliations of his successors caused his name to be associated with deeds for which he could not be held accountable. He died just before the outbreak of the Revolution! His children played a Tory part in it. Hence the prejudice which, together with the calamities of the New-England militia, served to depreciate his well-earned fame.

Sir William Johnson filled place and accomplished a work of the highest responsibility and consequence. He held the Six Nations to a policy either of neutrality or of active alliance with the English at a time when the hostility of this formidable league might have meant final ruin to England. He thus defended, too, the great Mohawk Valley. He destroyed the most formidable French army that had crossed the Canadian frontier. At the same time he advanced commerce, agriculture and the breeding of fine sheep and cattle. Even in his death he was self-devoted, for he incurred it by rising from a bed of sickness to address the Indians assembled in council at his house, and almost his last words were uttered in the interests of the community he had served so long and well. A man, this, of heroic type, surely, and a life deserving commemoration at the hands of posterity.

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